

ABRAHAM LINCOLN ASSOCIATION

THE WOODSTOCK SERIES NO. 1      \$1.00

Woodstock's U. S. Senator  
**JACOB COLLAMER**

By

Mary Louise Kelly

WOODSTOCK • VERMONT

*N. H. Charter 1761*

*N. Y. Patent 1772*

THE WOODSTOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1944

ABRAHAM LINCOLN ASSOCIATION

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*Incorporated 1943*

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THE preservation and care of such property and the arrangement, cataloging and indexing of such articles of personal property and memorabilia as may be received by the society.

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THE display and exhibition of items and property of historical interest received or held by the society.

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IN general, it shall be the object and purpose of this society to in any proper method foster and promote interest in matters of historical import and significance.

*Proceeds from the sale of this monograph will  
be used to augment the Publication Fund*

# JACOB COLLAMER

By

Mary Louise Kelly

*I hold it a noble task to rescue  
from oblivion those  
who deserve to be eternally  
remembered*

PLINY THE YOUNGER

THE WOODSTOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1944

ABRAHAM LINCOLN ASSOCIATION

## JACOB COLLAMER

*Born in Troy, N.Y., January 8, 1791*  
*Died in Woodstock, Vt., November 9, 1865*

"He died at his home in Woodstock . . . few citizens of Vermont have been called to so many positions of trust and honor as was Jacob Collamer, and few, indeed, have performed such varied duties with stricter fidelity, with more marked ability, or reflected greater honor upon the State than he did. Some of her public men may have shone with a greater brilliancy, but none with a steadier or more enduring light. As lawyer and judge in Vermont, as representative of the State in both houses of the national legislative body, he easily ranked among the foremost men of his time. In pursuance of an act of the Legislature of Vermont in 1872, a statue of Judge Collamer, executed by Preston Powers, son of Hiram Powers (a native of Windsor County, Vt.), was placed in the National Statuary Hall at Washington, D.C. The only other citizen of Vermont having received a like honor from the State being General Ethan Allen."

Aldrich and Holmes, *History of Vermont* (1891), p. 856.

B

C 699 &

Lincoln Room

## JACOB COLLAMER

IN VERMONT'S corner of the Hall of Fame stand the statues of two noted men. One is of Ethan Allen, about whom much has been written. This is about the other man whom we are too apt to forget — my great-great-grandfather, Jacob Collamer.

The Green Mountain State was his adopted home, for he was born in Troy, New York. At that time, 1791, Vermont was a new, struggling state, "up North" and thoughts of moving there were far distant from the mind of his father, an industrious carpenter of limited means. Nevertheless, four years later found the Collamer family settled in Burlington, Vermont. There is little to distinguish Collamer's childhood from that of countless other poor children. Everyone in his family of three boys and five girls had to help with the work, and there was even more for each to do after the death of their father when Collamer was still a small boy.

Somehow his mother managed to raise the necessary funds to send him to college and when he was but fifteen he entered the University of Vermont, next to the youngest in his class. Because his education was lacking in several respects, the whole summer before he was enrolled was spent in hard work and study. It was said he mastered the principles of Latin grammar in six weeks while chopping wood.

An amusing incident is told concerning his life there at college. One day Dr. Sanders, president of the University, suggested to the members of his class that thereafter they come to recitation in shoes. The students were so poor that many of them, Jacob Collamer included, came to class barefooted. Jacob reported the situation to his widowed mother and she succeeded in spinning enough shoe thread to make him a pair of shoes. In an effort to save them from wear as long as possible, he carried them to and from the place of recitation, hiding them in a pine brush fence overnight. In this way his shoes lasted as long as his mother could wish. Despite the disadvantage of his poverty, Collamer managed to study profitably and graduated with his class in 1810 with "credit and commendation for good conduct and scholarship."

Upon graduating from the University, he at once entered the study of law in St. Albans. Two years later he left temporarily to serve as a lieutenant of artillery in the frontier campaign during the War of 1812. Upon his return he was admitted to the Bar (1813) and it was not long before he was regarded as one of the most promising of its younger members.

While visiting in Barre shortly after, an incident occurred which he used to tell with amusement many years later. Young Collamer was accompanying a Mr. Smith to a trial in a neighboring town. He was to make his first argument there and so it was for him an important occasion. It was winter and he wore under his long coat his only suit of clothes. On the way to the courthouse the carriage was upset and his trousers suffered such a rent that he was forced to wear his long coat all through the trial. With such a start he entered on the career which was to carry him to such heights of public and professional fame.

In Randolph Center, he hung out his first shingle. There he did as much professional work as he could get and added to his meager salary by collecting taxes for the United States government. In 1816 he decided to move to Royalton and there he remained for twenty years. Soon after, he married Mary Stone and their marriage proved ideally happy. Representing Royalton four times in the State Legislature, he soon gained a reputation for his clear reasoning and fair judgment. It was largely through his ability and determination that the Constitution was amended, making the Senate a separate branch of the Legislature.

In 1833, he was elected one of the Assistant Judges of the Supreme Court, which position he held for nearly ten years when he declined a re-election. Though not an extensive reader, he knew his facts and his decisions were never questioned. His experiences as Judge formed a firm foundation for his later work as Senator.

Upon leaving the Bench, he again moved, this time to Woodstock, and resumed his law practice in the town which was his home for the remainder of his life. He was not allowed to remain for long in private practice, however, for he was soon elected Vermont's Representative to Congress (March, 1849). Though he had already gained a reputation as lawyer and judge, his real fame was won there. After three elections he declined a fourth and was then chosen Postmaster-General in President Taylor's cabinet.

Under Collamer, many reforms in our postal system were brought about. It was he who supervised the making of the first United States postage stamps. He sent the first one on a letter to his brother in Barre, saying that if the "new system worked, the stamp would some day be quite valuable." When President Taylor died (July, 1850), he resigned with the rest of the cabinet.

His next four years were spent as Circuit Judge in Vermont, presiding in County Courts. He still found time to devote to his community and family. He was elected president of the newly founded medical college in Woodstock, a position he held for seven years. He was the first to be given the degree of Doctor of Laws by the University of Vermont and this honor was



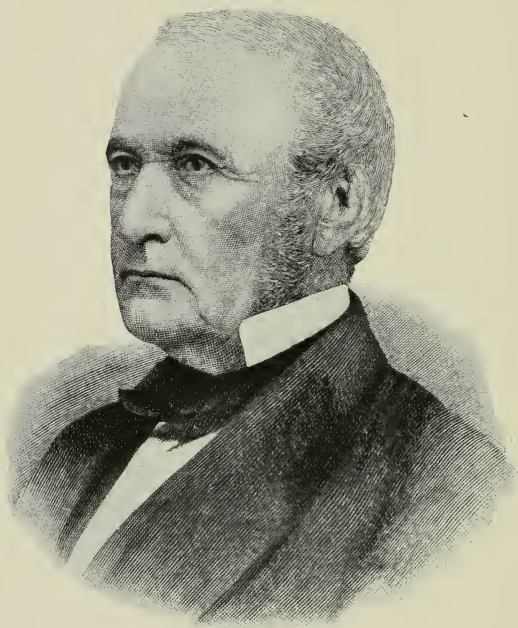
DAGUERD. BY BRADY, N.Y.

ENGD. BY A. H. RITCHIE, N.Y.

*J. Collamer*

POSTMASTER GENERAL

March 1849 — July 1850.



*J. Hollander*



later given to him by Dartmouth College. He was often chosen to hold other honorary positions, but his greatest happiness came when he was with his family. His seven children loved him dearly and he was never heard to utter a cross or unkind word to them. He was a loving and loved husband and it is little wonder his home was the happy place it was. He spent many hours improving the grounds of his yellow brick house and there still remain the elm and maple trees which he planted one spring. He was a prominent and active member of the Congregational church in his community, and his was a familiar figure as he sat in his accustomed seat each Sunday in the old white meeting house.

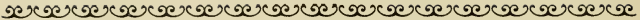
In 1854, he was elected to represent Vermont in the United States Senate and for the next ten years he was foremost among its members. Immediately placed on three important committees, he entered into the numerous activities with spirit. In the stirring days before and during the Civil War, he had an active part. President Lincoln and Senator Collamer were known to be friends both politically and personally. The President often conferred with him about important questions and showed an interest in his suggestions. Two prized possessions in the Collamer family today are notes which Lincoln wrote. Both endeavored to bring the North and South together again and the sudden death of his beloved president came as a great shock. He was walking in his garden in Woodstock when the news was brought to him, and it is said he exclaimed, "My God, what will become of our country now!" It is perhaps best that he did not live to see the worst of what he had feared and tried to avoid.

It is difficult to point to any one of his speeches as his greatest, for he expressed his views on a multitude of occasions. He was regarded as a conservative but only inasmuch as he disliked going against the Constitution which he was ever ready to uphold. He was a radical, however, in his wish to have every governmental department strained to the utmost to suppress the Great Rebellion. He was a conscientious statesman and would sacrifice the favor of his party rather than go against what he believed was right. In all he did, his state was behind him and his policies were Vermont's.

At the time of his death in 1865 (Nov. 9), he was still one of the Senate's foremost members and the respect in which he was held was increasing each year he wore his senatorial robes. His death at the age of seventy-four came as a loss to the whole nation, and special services were held in a joint meeting of Congress. For nearly half a century he had been active in public life and his death came at the peak of his career. Today Vermonters may look back with pride at another Vermonter — Jacob Collamer, who once again had proved that the Green Mountains make great men.

MARY LOUISE KELLY

## APPENDIX



### THE COLLAMER ESSAY

UNDER the heading "My Great-Great-Grandfather" the foregoing paper was prepared by Mary Louise Kelly of Woodstock, Vermont, while a student in 1943 at the Woodstock High School, and was entered in the Edmunds Memorial History Essay contest, open to all high school students in Vermont. This essay won the Windsor County prize and was awarded first prize and \$100 in the state contest.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE LINCOLN-COLLAMER LETTERS

*Reproduced for the first time by permission of the owner*

MARY COLLAMER CLOUGH

President Lincoln was inaugurated March 4, 1861, and faced, in his first week in Washington, a crisis greater than any which has ever confronted the government of the United States or a president of this nation — a crisis of secession and of Civil War. "A crisis of such gravity, Lincoln had sought the advice of his official advisers," said Barton.<sup>1</sup> It will be recalled that the Southern Confederacy was formed February 4, 1861; that Jefferson Davis was inaugurated President of the Confederacy February 18, 1861; that an act of secession had been adopted by the legislatures of seven states prior to Lincoln's inauguration; that the South and their Northern supporters held him in contempt; that his Cabinet was not a unit; that on March 5th he was informed Fort Sumter must be relieved or surrender; that Washington in general and many officials were opposed to him — and so it is little wonder that on the eighth day after his inaugural Lincoln addressed Senator Collamer with the phrase "God help me!"

Executive Mansion  
March 12, 1861

Hon. Jacob Colamer,  
My dear sir:

God help me!  
It is said I have offended you —  
Please tell me how.

Yours very truly  
A. Lincoln

1. William E. Barton, *President Lincoln* (1933), I, 229.

Executive Mansion.

March 12. 1861

Hon. Jacob Collamer.

My dear Sir:

God keep me!

It is said I have offend-  
ed you. Please tell me  
how.

Yours very truly

A. Lincoln

Collamer's Reply:

March 14

Dear Sir,

I am entirely insensible that you have,  
in any way, offended me. I cherish no sentiment  
towards you but that of kindness and confidence.

Very respectfully

His Excellency  
A. Lincoln, President

Your Humble Servt  
J. Collamer

The President replied to this as follows:

March 15, 1861

Hon. Jacob Collamer.

My dear sir

I am much relieved to learn that  
I have been misinformed as to your having been  
offended.

Yours very truly  
A. Lincoln

March 14.

Dear Sir,

I am entirely insensible  
that you have, in any way, offended  
me, I cherish no sentiment towards  
you but that of kindness & confidence.

Very respectfully  
Your humble servant,

A. Lincoln

His Excellency

A. Lincoln, President.

March 15. 1861

Hon. Jacob Colburn.

My dear Sir

I am much re-  
lieved to learn that I have been  
misinformed as to your having been  
offended.

Yours very truly  
A. Lincoln

LINCOLN probably did not know Collamer intimately at that time, as in the first letter he omitted an "l" in the spelling of Collamer, but he undoubtedly was informed as to Collamer's high standing and leadership in the Senate and of his position on many public matters during his many years of public service in the House and Senate.

James G. Blaine wrote, "No more difficult task has ever been presented to any government than that which Mr. Lincoln and his Cabinet assumed in the month of March, 1861."<sup>2</sup>

It would appear that the Senator and the President had much in common on the Slavery issue and Lincoln greatly desired his cooperation within eight days of his inauguration.

\* \* \* \* \*

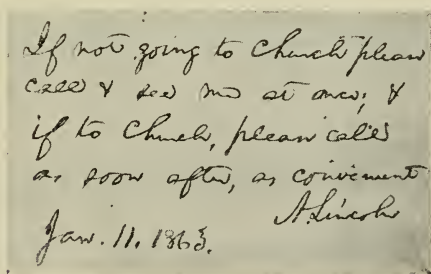
IT was on Thursday, January 1, 1863, President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation but this did not abolish Slavery and Lincoln knew that a further step must be taken "to efface the blot of Slavery from the Republic." On Wednesday, January 14, 1863, Representative Wilson of Iowa, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, reported a proposed amendment to the Constitution to prohibit Slavery in the United States. Knowing Collamer's position on the Slavery issue it is more than probable that the President wished to confer with the leader of the Senate, Senator Collamer, on this subject, and asked him to call on Sunday, January 11, 1863.

If not going to church please call and see me at once; and if to church, please call as soon after, as convenient.

January 11, 1863

A. Lincoln

2. *Twenty Years of Congress* (1884).



If not going to Church please  
call & see me at once; &  
if to Church, please call  
as soon after, as convenient  
A. Lincoln  
Jan. 11. 1863.

CROCKETT in his *History of Vermont*<sup>3</sup> states that Collamer was at church and that "as soon as he returned he proceeded to the White House where he remained twelve hours in consultation with the President."

Evidently the President knew of the Senator's church habits and his standing as "a Christian man and a Christian gentleman." Collamer was a church member of long standing and it was Congressman Grider of Kentucky in his address to the House of Representatives who stated that "when I had the honor to be . . . in the House with Judge Collamer, we had a congressional prayer meeting. I remember distinctly that Judge Collamer, as a Christian gentleman was uniformly there and participated in the devotional exercises. They were of frequent occurrence, and he used to attend."

It would be of great interest if we had a stenographic report of that Sunday conference, but unfortunately no record remains in Senator Collamer's papers referring to this urgent "call at once" summons of the President.

On the occasion of the candidacy of Judge Collamer to the U.S. Senate in 1854, he "announced that he was utterly opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and favored immediate and unconditional repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law, unless modified to permit a jury trial in the place of arrest."<sup>4</sup>

#### TWICE CONSIDERED FOR NATIONAL TICKET

At the first Republican National Convention held in Philadelphia, June 17, 1856 — "on an informal ballot for a candidate for Vice President, the fifteen votes from this State were cast for Jacob Collamer of Vermont."<sup>5</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

At the National Republican Convention in 1860, on the first ballot, "Vermont's votes were cast for Senator Jacob Collamer, as a deserved compliment to a fellow Vermonter,"<sup>6</sup> and on the second ballot the delegation voted for Abraham Lincoln.

#### NATIONAL STATUARY HALL

The old Hall of Representatives in Washington by a provision of the sundry civil bill of July 2, 1864, was set apart as a National Hall of Statuary pursuant to a resolution offered by Mr. Morrill of Vermont. The President, at the same time, was given

authority to invite each state to contribute for its adornment two statues, in bronze or marble, of deceased citizens of the State whom "for their renown or from civic or military services she should consider worthy of such national commemoration."<sup>7</sup>

3. IV, 9.

4. Walter Hill Crockett, *History of Vermont* (1921), III, 431.

5. *Idem*, p. 447.

6. *Idem*, p. 485.

7. George C. Hazelton, Jr., *The National Capitol* (1897).

## THE COLLAMER STATUE

TWO Vermont Legislatures approved Collamer and Allen for Statuary Hall. The marble statue is the work of Preston Powers.

Pursuant<sup>8</sup> to the Congressional Act of 1864 and by virtue of an act by the Vermont Assembly in 1865, Governor Paul Dillingham appointed Hon. Justin S. Morrill and Hon. George F. Edmunds, Commissioners to select the names of the two Vermonters to be so honored.

The Commissioners in their report of October, 1866, selected Ethan Allen and Jacob Collamer stating that he "has left so many records of service in the various walks of life that it is impossible he should be overlooked" . . . "possessing a vigorous intellect, trained in schools and in his profession, he was able to adapt himself to varied employment and was held long in prominent service, state and national."

The Commission recommended the employment of Hiram Powers, a native of Vermont, for the statue of Mr. Collamer and addressed him in Florence, Italy, under date of May 30, 1866, asking him his terms to undertake a statue 7½ feet high. Mr. Powers replied on July 11, 1866, stating that while his price for such a statue "should be at least \$10,000, he would accept \$8000."

[Hiram Powers died in Florence, Italy, June 27, 1873, and his son, Preston Powers, received the commission.]

In Acts and Resolves passed by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont at the Second Biennial Session, 1872, pub. 1873, page 647:

No. 290. An act authorizing the Governor to contract for statues of Jacob Collamer and Ethan Allen.

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. The Governor of this state is authorized and requested to contract, in behalf of the state with Hiram Powers, for a statue in marble of the late Jacob Collamer, and with Larkin G. Mead, for a statue in marble of Ethan Allen, and said statues when completed, to be placed in the national statuary hall in Washington.

Sec. 2. A sum, not exceeding fifteen thousand dollars, is hereby appropriated for said object, and the bills for the expenses

incurred under this act shall be audited by the auditor of accounts.

Approved November 27, 1872.

At the Third Biennial Session, 1874, pub. 1874, page 384:

No. 187. An act to amend an act authorizing the Governor to contract for statues of Jacob Collamer and Ethan Allen, approved November 27, 1872.

Sec. 1. The governor of this state is authorized and requested to contract in behalf of the State, with such person as he shall deem proper, for a statue in marble of the late Jacob Collamer, and with Larkin G. Mead for a statue in marble of Ethan Allen, and said statues when completed, to be placed in the national statuary hall in Washington.

Approved October 28, 1874.

Relocation of statues in Statuary Hall was provided by an enactment on February 24, 1933, due to structural conditions, and under this authority one statue from each state was allotted to Statuary Hall (that from Vermont being Ethan Allen), and seventeen statues, including that of Jacob Collamer, were relocated in the Hall of Columns.<sup>9</sup>

In the brief "biographies of citizens commemorated by Statues from States" (p. 33) the following appears under Vermont: "Collamer was an illustrious statesman, a justice of the supreme court of the State, Member of the House of Representatives, Postmaster General and, at the time of his death, a United States Senator."

Congressional proceedings in regard to the acceptance of the Collamer statue show that Mr. Morrill presented the resolution to the Senate January 31, 1881.

U.S. Senator Morrill, from Vermont, in presenting his statue for Statuary Hall, declared him to be Vermont's "foremost citizen in ability, moral excellence and national distinction."

8. Commission's Report to the Governor of Vermont, October, 1866.

9. Report of the Architect of the Capitol (Washington, 1941), pp. 27, 28, 29.

## COLLAMER ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

"Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia said of Mr. Collamer's first speech in Congress, made February 8, 1844, upon a point of Constitutional law when he had been in the House only two months:

"This speech of Judge Collamer, not over thirty minutes in length, was so pointed, clear, logical and conclusive, that it put him at once in the front rank of debaters, lawyers and jurists in the House.'"<sup>10</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Collamer, in his admirable and instructive address February 12, 1862, on the Treasury-note bill, said:

"I do not know how other members of the Senate look upon the obligation of their oath to support the Constitution of the United States.

"To me it is an oath registered in heaven as well as upon earth."

\* \* \* \* \*

Henry Wilson, in his *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power*, said that Mr. Collamer "was a statesman of recognized ability and firmness, and was unquestionably the most decided of any member of the Cabinet (of President Taylor) in his opposition to the increasing encroachments of the slave power."

\* \* \* \* \*

The speeches and debates made by the Hon. Jacob Collamer may be found in the *Congressional Record*, Washington, D.C., but the following pamphlets may be seen in the Public Library, Woodstock, Vt.:

*February 8, 1844 — His First Speech in the House of Representatives*

On the constitutional validity of the act of Congress on the apportionment of Representatives.

*April 29, 1844 — House of Representatives*

On wool and woollens — a tariff measure — sheep in Vermont.

*January 23, 1845 — House of Representatives*

On the annexation of Texas — cites the difference between Vermont and Texas.

*June 26, 1846 — House of Representatives*

On the tariff.

*February 1, 1848 — House of Representatives*

On the Mexican War.

*June 23, 1848 — House of Representatives*

On disposition of public lands.

*March 12, 1856 — U.S. Senate*

On affairs in Kansas.

*April 3 & 4, 1856 — U.S. Senate*

On affairs in the Territory of Kansas — which caused consternation among the hosts of slavery.

*December 9, 1856 — U.S. Senate*

On the President's (Buchanan) message — the regulation of slavery in territories and a review of slave power.

*February 26, 1857 — U.S. Senate*

On the tariff and wool interest — history of wool and sheep in U.S. and Vermont.

*February 18, 1858 — U.S. Senate*

On the constitution of Kansas — *in re slavery*.

*March 1 & 2, 1858 — U.S. Senate*

On the Kansas question — the admission.

*April 27, 1858 — U.S. Senate*

On the admission of Kansas.

*February 21, 1859 — U.S. Senate*

On the acquisition of Cuba.

*March 8, 1860 — U.S. Senate*

On slavery in the territories.

*February 12, 1862 — U.S. Senate*

On the Treasury-note bill.

*April 24, 1862 — U.S. Senate*

On bill to confiscate the property and free the slaves of rebels.

*February 11, 1863 — U.S. Senate*

On the bill to provide a national currency.

\* \* \* \* \*

"His national career began with his election to congress in 1843, and he soon attracted the attention of the country at large by his able speech on 'Wool and Woollens' during the debates on the tariff."<sup>11</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

"The argument which fixed his place in the front rank of the Whig leaders was delivered in April (1844) on the tariff, and under the title 'Wool and Woollens' to which a large part of it was given. It is, perhaps, the strongest and most exhaustive argument ever made in favor of protection to wool growing, and as a historical, constitutional and economic argument was one of the best Congress has ever heard on the protective side of the question."<sup>12</sup>

10. Crockett, *op. cit.*, IV, 9.

11. *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, IV, 371.

12. *Men of Vermont* (1894).







COLLAMER HOUSE

*This brick house was built in 1832 or 1833 (see Dana, History of Woodstock) and was occupied by Jacob Collamer from Royalton in April, 1836, until his death. "He made great improvements in the house and grounds from time to time, and it is now one of the pleasantest situations in the Village" (Dana, 1887).*

Sunset Cox, in his *Three Decades*, said Senator Collamer was "regarded as not indifferent to a compromise which would at least retain the border states if it did not stop the movement of the Gulf states" toward secession.

\* \* \* \* \*

U.S. Senator Sumner of Massachusetts said:

"The great act of July 13, 1861, which gave to the war for the suppression of the rebellion its first congressional sanction, and invested the President with new powers, was drawn by him. It was he that set in motion the great ban, not yet lifted, by which the rebel States were shut out from the communion of the Union.

"This is a landmark in our history, and it might properly be known by the name of its author, as 'Collamer's Statute.'"

\* \* \* \* \*

Following the decisive defeat of the Union Army at Bull Run (July 21, 1861) — "it was a rout, and on the retreat became a panic"<sup>13</sup> — an immediate danger arose of an outbreak in the border slave states by the enemies of the Union playing upon the fears and prejudices of the slaveholders. To counteract this effort a resolution known as the Crittenden Resolution was introduced in the House of Representatives by Mr. John Crittenden of Kentucky which set forth that "the deplorable civil war has been forced upon the country by the Disunionists of the Southern States now in arms against the Constitutional Government"; that "in this National emergency, Congress, banishing all feelings of mere passion or resentment, will recollect only its duty to the whole country"; that "the war is not waged in any spirit of oppression, or for any purpose of conquest or subjugation, or the overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of those States, but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired"; and that, "as soon as

these objects are accomplished, the war ought to cease." The resolution was adopted by the House without debate, and with only two negative votes.

In the Senate an acrimonious debate resulted, but the resolution was finally adopted with only five dissenting votes.

Mr. Collamer spoke ably for the resolution. He was not however afraid of the word "subjugation." Its literal, classical meaning was "to pass under the yoke," but in the popular acceptation it meant that "all the people of the United States should submit to the Constitution and laws."

On the matter of the legal-tender bill before the Senate, Mr. Collamer of Vermont followed Mr. Fessenden in an exhaustive argument against the bill as a violation of the Constitution. He believed "in the power of the government to sustain itself in the strife physically and pecuniarily." He was not willing to say to a man, "Here is my note: if I do not pay it, you must steal the amount from the first man you come to, and give him this note in payment." He would not be governed in this matter, as Mr. Fessenden intimated he might be, "by necessity." He had taken an oath to support the Constitution, and he believed this bill violated it. He "would not overthrow the Constitution in the Senate Chamber while the rebels are endeavoring to overthrow it by war."<sup>14</sup> Upon the final vote the bill passed by a vote of 30 to 7 — four Democrats and three Republicans, including Senator Collamer, voted in the negative.

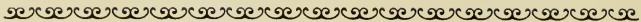
In the discussion of the national-bank system, "Mr. Collamer of Vermont denied the right to tax the State banks out of existence, and to establish corporations in the States and Territories. Independently of the power of visitation by those States and Territories, he objected to making the government responsible for the ultimate redemption of the bills by the securities deposited. He inquired in what respect the promises of the National banks would be better than the notes of the government, and why should they be substituted for them?"<sup>15</sup>

13. Blaine, *op. cit.*, I, 338-339.

14. *Idem*, p. 423.

15. *Idem*, p. 477.

## SYMPOSIA<sup>16</sup>



On him and his high endeavour  
The light of praise shall shine for ever.

WORDSWORTH

James G. Blaine wrote in his *Twenty Years of Congress*:

"Jacob Collamer of Vermont was a senator of eminent worth and ability. He had earned honorable fame as a member of the House of Representatives, and as a member of the Cabinet in the administration of General Taylor. He had entered the Senate at a ripe age, and with every qualification for distinguished service. To describe him in a single word, he was a wise man. Conservative in his nature, he was sure to advise against rashness. Sturdy in his principles, he always counseled firmness. In the periods of excitement through which the party was about to pass, his judgment was sure to prove of highest value — influenced, as it always was, by patriotism, and guided by conscience. Without power as an orator, he was listened to in the Senate with profound attention, as one who never offered counsel that was not needed. He carried into the Senate the gravity, the dignity, the weight of character, which enabled him to control more ardent natures; and he brought to a later generation the wisdom and experience acquired in a long life devoted to the service of his state and of his country."<sup>17</sup>

U.S. Senator Solomon Foot of Vermont, who served in the Senate with Mr. Collamer, in an address, said in part:

"Jacob Collamer was endowed with a rare combination of intellectual and moral qualities of a high order; a capacious mind, at once active, clear, and discriminating — a mind, too, on which the analytic powers and the reflective faculties were largely developed."

\* \* \* \* \*

Congressman Justin S. Morrill of Vermont said:

"In his own State at the time of his decease he was regarded as her foremost man, and his loss will be mourned by the nation as the loss of one of its great men. . . . His merits in the Senate as a constitutional lawyer of ample learning and uncommon

sagacity were cheerfully acknowledged there."

\* \* \* \* \*

U.S. Senator William Pitt Fessenden of Maine said:

"Among the distinguished men who during the past ten years have occupied these seats, I regarded Senator Collamer as having no superior."

\* \* \* \* \*

U.S. Senator James Dixon of Connecticut spoke of him as "the Nestor of the American Senate. . . ."

"In the truest and best sense of the word, Judge Collamer was a conservative. To conserve, to defend, to uphold, and maintain the Government; the Union, the Constitution, the laws of the United States — this was his constant effort, the mission and the labor of his life."

\* \* \* \* \*

U.S. Senator Riddle of Delaware:

"In the death of Jacob Collamer, I think Vermont has lost one of her brightest jewels, the Senate one of its most courteous members, and the country one of its greatest statesmen. He was great in feeling, great in thought, great in principle, and great in action."

\* \* \* \* \*

U.S. Senator Reverdy Johnson of Maryland said:

"With a mind perfectly honest, with a long experience at the bar and on the bench of his own State (a bar and bench ever distinguished for ability and learning) he came to the councils of the general government thoroughly prepared to meet their highest demands, and this the result proved.

"From the first he ranked among the ablest of our jurists and statesmen, and continued to maintain that rank to the last."

\* \* \* \* \*

U.S. Senator Ira Harris of New York said:

"The Senate has, indeed, lost one of its

16. References: *Addresses on the Death of Hon. Jacob Collamer delivered in the Senate and House of Representatives*, December, 1865 (85 pp.).

17. I, 318.

ablest statesmen, one of its purest patriots. In honoring such a man, we honor ourselves. . . . A man of great personal dignity, he was justly esteemed for the excellence of his judgment and the purity of his character. His most prominent characteristics were, I think, sound discretion, clear discernment, good common sense, and great honesty of purpose.

"No purer patriot ever participated in the councils of the nation."

\* \* \* \* \*

Congressman Fred E. Woodbridge of Vermont said:

"His career as a senator is known to the whole country. In the most distinguished body of the nation he had no rival in spotless integrity and purity of character, and no superior in debate."

\* \* \* \* \*

Congressman Henry Grider of Kentucky said:

"He has marked his character upon the records of his country. Long in public life, he proved himself competent and true and faithful in every position to which he was appointed. . . . He was not only a man of integrity and morality but he was a Christian man and a Christian gentleman."

\* \* \* \* \*

Congressman John B. Alley of Massachusetts said:

"I have heard some of his associates in the Senate and scores of others remark that he was the wisest man in that august body. . . . Jacob Collamer: the wise Senator, the able statesman, the great lawyer."

\* \* \* \* \*

U.S. Senator Anthony of Rhode Island, editor of the *Providence Journal*, wrote:

"Judge Collamer was the Nestor of the Senate. . . . On every occasion his opinion had great weight."

\* \* \* \* \*

"I refrain from further notice of specific speeches, remarking that it will prove difficult to find, in the whole field of Congressional discussion, the speeches of any one man, which, for facts, and argument, and

illustration combined, embody so much pertinent and valuable information upon the subjects in hand — so much intelligible development — so much of potent and convincing treatment, by logic, by analogy, and by example. The statesman, the jurist, the politician, and the unprofessional and untitled citizen, may be largely instructed, and edified, and strengthened by the attentive study of them."<sup>18</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

U.S. Senator Judge Luke P. Poland:

"His published opinions while a judge of the (state) Supreme Court are models of judicial composition. For accuracy of learning, terseness of statement, clearness and comprehensiveness of style, I do not know where they are excelled."

\* \* \* \* \*

Congressman Wentworth of Illinois said:

"He looked, as I do, upon economy, as one of the best safeguards of our government, and as one of the essential requisites of a statesman."

\* \* \* \* \*

His Cabinet associate, Reverdy Johnson, said of the Post Office Department, of which Collamer was the head, that the "vast and complicated business of the department was never more ably conducted." Congressman Morrill of Vermont stated "the excess of revenues of the General Post Office over the expenditures in 1849 was \$400,000."

\* \* \* \* \*

Walter Hill Crockett in his *History of Vermont*:

"He was a lawyer and a Judge of great ability, and was considered an authority on constitutional law in the United States Senate."<sup>19</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Upon the matter of a "cordial reconstruction," sought by Lincoln and the terms of General Johnson's surrender to General Sherman (received after Lincoln's death) McClure<sup>20</sup> quotes from "a letter written . . . by a statesman of calm temper and good judgment." — J. Collamer, dated Woodstock, Vt., June 14, 1865.

18. Judge James Barret in the *Memorial Address on the Life and Character of the Hon. Jacob Collamer* (p. 49) before the Vermont Historical Society, October 20, 1868.

19. III, 328.

20. A. K. McClure, *Abraham Lincoln and Men of War-times*, p. 245.

Following the receipt of the message to Congress from President Buchanan in December, 1860, the famous Senate Committee of Thirteen was appointed on December 20<sup>21</sup> "a strong and representative committee chosen from the four great political parties to the late Presidential election and embracing recognized leaders in each." "A special committee . . . to concert measures of compromise or pacification, either through legislation or constitutional amendments."

Jacob Collamer was a member of this committee which was unable to reach a compromise on the stand taken by the South; the other members were—Stephen A. Douglas, Illinois; Jefferson Davis, Mississippi; John Crittenden, Kentucky; Pow-

ell, Kentucky; Toombs, Georgia; Hunter, Virginia; Grimes, Iowa; Doolittle, Wisconsin; Bigler, Pennsylvania; Rice, Minnesota.

\* \* \* \* \*

In December, 1862, "in the blackest hour in President Lincoln's whole life"<sup>22</sup> with his Cabinet divided, facing a committee appointed by the Senate to present a virtual command to him, Lincoln met with his Cabinet and the hostile committee and out-generated them. In reporting the conference to the Republican caucus that Secretary Chase had declared the Cabinet was supporting the President, Collamer (a member of the committee) gruffly stated "He lied."

21. Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, II, 405-414.

22. William E. Barton, *President Lincoln* (1933), II, 495-499.

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# WORDS of a VERMONT

ADDRESSING a delegation of Vermonters who had called to congratulate him on his appointment in March, 1849, by President Taylor, to his Cabinet as Postmaster General, Collamer said that Washington, in closely scanning the Northern Constellation with President Taylor, had discovered a star hitherto unknown, "small indeed, but very brilliant and very beautiful . . . the star that never sets,"\* adding:

"Ours is the only Whig State in the Union which has never swerved from her political faith, and almost the only one which has never shared the patronage of the General Government."

\* \* \* \* \*

Congressman Wentworth of Illinois said of Senator Collamer: "He looked, as I do, upon economy, as one of the best safeguards of our government, and as one of the essential requisites of a statesman."

His Cabinet associate, Reverdy Johnson, said of the Post Office Department of which Collamer was the head that the "vast and complicated business of the department was never more ably conducted" — (Congressman Morrill of Vermont stated "the excess of revenues of the General Post Office over the expenditures in 1849 was \$400,000).

\* \* \* \* \*

In his admirable and instructive address February 12, 1862, on the Treasury-note bill, he said:

"I do not know how other members of the Senate look upon the obligation of their oath to support the Constitution of the United States.

"To me it is an oath registered in heaven as well as upon earth."

In a speech on April 24, 1862, before the United States Senate, Collamer said:

"I do not think my people wish me to contribute to breaking any provision of the Constitution; and they know I would not do it if they did wish it."

\* Crockett, *History of Vermont*, III, 376.